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REMARKS OF JOHN A. POOR,

UPON THE

EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN RAILWAY,

Made at the City Hall in Portland, July 22d, 1851, at a general meeting of the friends of that enterprise.

The meeting was called to order by MR. DOW, the Mayor, and GEN. FESSENDEN was chosen President. On taking the Chair the President addressed the meeting on the considerations which should urge them to a vigorous prosecution of the enterprise, and called on the Executive Committee for such information and statements as they were prepared to present.

JOHN A. POOR, Esq., responded to this call, and said, as chairman of the committee, he would reply in the briefest terms possible, consistent with a proper statement of the condition of the enterprise.

On the 2d of August last, the memorable Convention, spoken of by the President, separated, after a three days' session, characterized by the utmost enthusiasm in favor of the great objects in view, in which were exhibited some of the most brilliant displays of oratory, which had ever been drawn forth, on any occasion. It was the first social reunion that had ever taken place between the people of sister States and Provinces, after 70 years of separation. The descendants of a common race, Anglo Saxon brethren, after this long period of partial estrangement, and continued political separation, having outgrown and forgotten the differences of their fathers, came together upon the broad platform of a common ancestry, and a common sympathy, to lay the foundations of an enterprize of a deep but of a common interest to them all.

It was proposed to extend a line of Railway, which should connect Colonies and States, and which would bring in its train, freedom of intercourse, and the common alliances of social and commercial fellowship and fraternity. Eschewing all political purposes, it looked forward to an *inevitable* reciprocity between the British Provinces and the United States.

The Railway is not an end, but a means; a means of social and commercial advancement — an instrumentality, by which great interests are to be subserved — by which the raw material and the rich products of one portion of the country may be exchanged with those of another. We want the coal, the iron, the plaster, and the grindstones of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and they in turn want the sugars, the farming utensils, the hats, shoes and other manufactures of New England. We want a railway across the breadth of our State, to bring all our people into easy communication with each other. More than all this, we want to open out a line of railway toward the nearest available point of this continent to Europe, in order to save expense in sending forth or in procuring supplies from Europe. Instead of seeing all the trade between this country and Europe passing almost in sight of our own coast, and going down on the great sailing circle, some five hundred miles past us, to New York, and from thence reshipped back to us, we want the trade across the Atlantic, and the travel across the Atlantic, reduced to its lowest cost, and to the shortest period of time, — to bring the producer and consumer of both continents, in closest proximity.

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The plan agreed upon at the Portland Convention, he believed, was the only one that could be legitimately or profitably carried out. The idea was, to carry out this work in separate sections, by different communities, all working in subordination to one general plan, so that a continuous line of railway, under private management, should eventually extend from the cities of Bangor, of Portland, of Boston and New York, to the Eastern shore of Nova Scotia, upon the Atlantic Ocean.

The beauty of the plan was, its simplicity, its coincidence with the natural laws of trade: its adaptation to the wants of the people of Maine, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The idea was purely commercial. Railways for military or political purposes, were neither in accordance with the spirit of the age, or of the spirit of railway progress. They have never been successful, and they never will be. Railways require, in order to success, the application of private selfishness, individual thrift and energy in their management.

It was with a spirit like this, and with opinions like these, that the resolutions of the Portland Convention were adopted. In accordance with these views, have been the proceedings of the committee. In Maine, our application for a charter was promptly responded to by the Legislature, and the necessary survey at once undertaken at the expense of the State.

In New Brunswick, similar measures were adopted, and every thing done that the most ardent friend of the Railway could desire. So that from the city of Portland East, to the boundary of Nova Scotia, the way has been prepared for the carrying out of this great work, as far, and as fast as private enterprise shall supply the means. It is questionable in my own mind, whether any resort to public credit, is either necessary or desirable. New Brunswick, however, tendered further assistance, to the amount of $1,250,000 in subscriptions to the stock, and a free gift of all the ungranted Crown lands lying within *five miles*, on each side the line. Had Nova Scotia adopted a similar policy the road might be looked upon as secured. Had the Nova Scotians gone home and gone to work, as the people of New Brunswick did, the history of the enterprise would have been a continued series of successes and of triumphs.

Unfortunately for the scheme, in Nova Scotia, political matters are paramount to all others. Among the men who had given the readiest support to the plan for calling the Portland Convention, was the Hon. JOSEPH HOWE, well known as a political leader in Nova Scotia. Mr. Howe expected to have been present, or rather agreed to be present, at the Portland Convention, but was prevented by official engagements. His intimate political friend, Hon. Mr. UNIACKE, the Attorney General of Nova Scotia, took an active and influential part in its proceedings, and was appointed one of the Executive Committee for Nova Scotia.

The ministerial party in Nova Scotia were thereby regarded as fully committed to the plan of the Portland Convention. On the return of the delegation to Halifax, the Hon. Mr. Howe seeing the enthusiasm for the Railway which had been kindled among the delegation, and anxious to share the honor of taking a leading part in its management, introduced into the public meeting called to receive the Report of the delegates, a resolution of the most extraordinary character, proposing to have the Railway undertaken as a government measure, by the colony, and built at the expense of the government.

This one unfortunate step has given a new turn to political affairs in British North America, if not seriously retarded the progress of the Lower Provinces.

Having become committed to the plan of a government Railway, Mr. Howe felt the difficulty of carrying it out; or of securing a majority of the House of Assembly of the Province without the co-operation of the Home government, and he goes out to England to raise money to build Nova Scotia's part of the line of our road.

Recollect, that at this time the Quebec and Halifax line had been abandoned. The plan of the Quebec and Halifax Railway was started in 1845, as a rival

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project to head off the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road. The Provinces of Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia united in an application for a survey, to the Home Government, which survey was ordered—commenced in 1845 or 1846, and finished in 1848.

The report of Maj. Robinson's survey was referred to the Railway Commissioners, and their report condemned the scheme as entirely destitute of commercial advantages — and they stated *that the Portland and Montreal Rail Road had such decided advantages as to preclude all hope of competition with it, for the trade of the St. Lawrence valley, by the Quebec and Halifax line.* Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, however, united in offering to the Imperial Goverment a grant of land on each side the line, and an annual payment of £20,000 sterling each, or £60,000 sterling in all, towards paying the interest on the cost, if the Imperial Government should undertake to build it, for its own uses and purposes.

The Imperial Government, by their despatches of April 5, 1849, and June 19, 1850, refused to undertake the work upon the pledges previously given, and, in language of the resolutions of the Legislature of New Brunswick, of April 5, 1851, these refusals "induced the people of this Province to turn their attention to the accomplishment of undertakings, which it would be in their power to carry out, and which, from their prospect of more immediate remuneration, would hold out greater inducements to capitalists to embark therein."

They accordingly entered into engagements to build the European and North American Railway, and the St. Andrews and Woodstock Road.

At the time of the separation of the Portland Convention, the plan of the Halifax and Quebec Railway had been practically abandoned in all the Provinces.—Quebec had turned her attention toward building a line to Melbourne, connecting herself with Montreal on the one hand, and with the Atlantic Ocean and the Lower Provinces, on the other, by our line.

Mr. Howe went to England, as the delegate from Nova Scotia, to advocate the E. and N. A. Railway. His first communication on the subject does ample justice to the claims of our enterprise.

The British Government still declined to embark in the scheme. Mr. Howe turned his attention from the Government to the *people* of England. He delivered lectures on emigration and colonization, at Southampton and elsewhere, and was believed to have influenced the Irish members who favored an Irish Packet Station for America, to join in opposition to the Russell Ministry.

During the period when Lord Stanley was attempting to construct a Tory Cabinet, Mr. Howe received assurances favorable to the Halifax and Quebec line, from the Tory leader, and he gave up the European and Northern American Railway to become the advocate of the Imperial Railway.

Lord Stanley, the great tory leader, in the month of February last, came out in an elaborate speech in the House of Lords, in advocacy of the Halifax and Quebec line, on the grounds of colonization and colonial empire. He was supported in this by the late Whig Chancellor of the Exchequer, Spring Rice, now Lord Monteagle.

On the return of the Russell Ministry to place again, Mr. Howe succeeded in appealing to the fears of the ministry, and instead of carrying out the enlarged, liberal and philanthropic spirit which characterized his countrymen in the Portland Convention, he appealed to the ancient prejudices of England against the United States, and revived the recollection of the scenes of our former bloody wars. He was supported in this by the tory party in England, and the peaceful, international and philanthropic spirit of the Convention was changed by the interpretations of Mr. Howe into one of propagandism, by which the integrity of the empire was threatened.

In this spirit, the old cast off plan of the Halifax and Quebec line was revived,

and the British Ministry directed Earl Grey to direct Mr. Under Sec'y Hawes to say to Mr. Howe that the British Ministry would recommend to Parliament that the money required should be advanced from the Imperial Treasury to build a line of railway "passing wholly through British territory from Halifax to Quebec or Montreal. Any deviation from the line recommended by Major Robinson and Capt. Henderson, must, however, be subject to the approval of Her Majesty's Government."

"It will further be required that the several Provincial Legislatures should pass laws making the loans which they are to raise, a first charge upon the Provincial Revenue, after any existing debts and payments on account of the Civil Lists settled on Her Majesty by laws now in force; and also that permanent taxes shall be imposed, (or taxes to continue in force till the debt shall be extinguished,) sufficient to provide for the payment of the interest and sinking fund of the loans proposed to be raised after discharging the above prior claims. It will further be necessary that the expenditure of the money raised under the guarantee of the Imperial Parliament shall take place under the superintendence of Comissioners appointed by Her Majesty's Government, and armed with sufficient power to secure the application of the funds so raised to their intended object. The Commissioners so appointed are not, however, to interfere with the arrangements of the Provincial Governments, except for the above purpose."

"The right of sending troops, stores, and mails, along the line at reasonable rates must likewise be secured.

"It is also to be understood that Her Majesty's Government will by no means *object to its forming a part of the plan which may be determined upon, that it should include a provision for establishing a communication between the projected Railway and Railways of the United States.*"

It is under this last clause that Mr. Howe claims to have secured the money to build the E. and N. A. R. R. And here is the turning point of the whole question. Mr. Hawes says the government will "by no means object to its forming part of the plan which MAY be agreed on," &c.

The whole is a matter of contingency. It may or may not be agreed upon, and it may or may not be the purpose of the British Ministry to favor the building of the European and North American Railway. If in their wisdom they choose to discountenance the work, they can easily find words to excuse themselves from any supposed pledge which the peculiar phraseology may seem to convey. My convictions are, that Mr. Howe has flung away the golden opportunity.—He should have rejected, calmly but most decidedly, Earl Grey's insiduous offers in behalf of the Halifax and Quebec line. After doing so much,—after making the claims of the Colonies for assistance, upon the mother country felt "by her Majesty's Government," he should have rejected any offer that could have required a surrender of the principle of *"responsible government."* The right of the Colonies to decide upon the lines of their Railways is just as essential to their independence as the right to vote supplies. The Hon. Mr. Howe had the power to become the leading mind of British North America. Had he possessed the firmness to have rejected, at once, Earl Grey's proposal, and thrown himself upon the good sense and the better judgment of the Colonists, he might have inspired an energy and a feeling of self respect at home, that would have enabled Nova Scotia to build her portion of the line under his guidance. Instead of this he snatched at the golden bait, which may yet elude his grasp.

At the recent Convention held at Toronto, by instructions to Lord Elgin, under Earl Grey's note of March 14, it now appears that the European and North American Railway formed a portion of the scheme there discussed. Mr. Howe found Canada generally indifferent, if not unfriendly to the Quebec and Halifax line, considered as a road between the two cities only. The Canadians demanded as a condition of their acceptance, the application of all the money to the extension of a Trunk Line from Halifax towards Toronto. The

seven millions sterling promised by Mr. Howe, they require to be all laid out in one line, extending it as far as possible toward Toronto from Halifax. The Hon. Mr. Howe, in his speech at Montreal, two weeks ago, told the Montreallers that he had secured the money "*to build the Great Trunk Line all the way from Halifax to Montreal.*"

The Hon. Mr. Hinks, on the 12th of July inst introduces into the Assembly of Canada, his 18 resolutions, claiming the imperial guarantee or an advance from the Imperial Treasury, of money enough to build from Halifax to Hamilton, 1200 miles, and it is insisted that on these terms only, will Canada come into the scheme.

One thing is quite certain, if Mr. Howe is to build the Imperial Railway all the way to Montreal, as he told the Montreallers in his recent speech, there will be nothing left for New Brunswick toward building the E. and N. A. R. R.—They may rely upon that.

Under this state of things our friends in New Brunswick are anxiously awaiting our movements. They ask nothing of the British Government but the privilege of building railways for themselves in thir own way. They have not shirked the labor, like the Howe Ministry in Nova Scotia. They have gone to work in the right way by helping themselves. They granted a noble charter. This is reluctantly assented to. They passed Facility Bills in aid of the road. These bills are withheld by Earl Grey until the charter shall be amended, providing especially for the transportation of *Her Majesty's troops*, and for securing Imperial control over such portion of the route as may be wanted for the Halifax and Quebec line.

The course of the British Government in reference to the European and North American Railway has caused a feeling of general discontent in the Lower Provinces. The provinces desired a line of railway connecting them with the railways of the United States. New Brunswick made no claims for Imperial assistance, and yet the British Ministry attempt to force upon her a line she does not want. True, she is not directly required to pledge all her revenues to maintain this grand Imperial Military line, by the way of Restigouche and Lake Metis. But her integrity is questioned if she demurs to this Imperial suggestion. In 1849, the Railway Commissioners, in answer to Earl Grey's inquiries, pronounce the Halifax and Quebec Railway impracticable for all commercial purposes, and valuable only as a military work, to secure the more easy maintenance of British power in the territory; and yet Earl Grey, in March, 1851, gravely calls on the Governor General to require "that a deputation from the Executive Councils of the two Lower Provinces should proceed to the seat of Government in Canada, in order to confer with your Lordship and with your Council for the purpose of coming to some agreement upon the subject, which, after being approved by the Legislatures of the several Provinces, might be submitted for the sanction of Parliament."

How could Earl Grey, or the British Ministry consistently, by implication even, favor the plan of embarking money in this undertaking, which in 1849 was deemed so utterly unworthy of confidence, and which every man in British North America knows, cannot for many years, at least, pay its running expenses? Still I derived the impression from a conversation with Lord Elgin a few days ago, that he regarded the British Government as sincerely desirous of seeing Earl Grey's scheme adopted and carried into effect.

This plan is favored as a means of retaining the North American Colonies, and the great question among English Statesmen now is, "*shall Great Britain retain her Colonies?*"

The last April No. of the Edinburgh Review contains an interesting article on the subject, and may be regarded as expressing the present feeling of the Whig Ministry on this question.

That she may long retain the British American Colonies, I sincerely desire.

If she will only give them *responsible government*, or the right of self-government her people can enjoy an amount of practical freedom, with a relief from taxation, beyond what are known to any other people. Still they must and will have free trade with us. Shut out from the markets of Europe by their geographical position, they require to trade with the United States. This we are disposed to grant to the fullest extent, on terms of *entire reciprocity*.

Their natural products are wanted by us, and they in return can more easily and cheaply buy of us, whatever they require from abroad, than from any other people. It is this feeling which brought the Portland Convention together. It is this feeling that now controls the public sentiment of N. Brunswick. It is this that led the Legislature of N. Brunswick to say with an unanimity unparalleled in her legislation, by the Resolutions of April 5, 1851, that she "cannot adopt the plan suggested in the correspondence between the Hon. Mr. Howe and the Right Hon. Earl Grey, accompanying His Excellency's Message; and is not prepared to pledge the public credit, or the future resources of the Province, further than is set forth in the address before mentioned, towards building the Great Trunk Line from Halifax to Quebec."

Her Facility Bill will enable her to build from St. John to Calais. But if she requires assistance, because that measure is withheld—or because her patriotism may be tempted by the offer of Imperial assistance, or her representatives tampered with, by mercenary appeals made through the pocket,—there is still left the opportunity of carrying forward the work under the broad and liberal charter already secured.

The people of the United States will not allow this opportunity to pass unnoticed; and when our brethren of New Brunswick shall lay the claims of their road before the people of the United States, they may rely upon a favorable response.

The proceedings in Nova Scotia forcibly illustrate the influence of colonial ideas and opinions. A habit of dependence operates upon a community in the same manner, and to the same extent, as upon individuals. A feeling of self-reliance and of self-respect is essential to all true success. It is the want of this in Provinces that is fast changing the relations between their people and our own. It is by the man of resolute will, of determined purpose, of decided action, that difficulties are overcome, obstacles removed, and success made sure. The same thing is as true in reference to communities as to individuals.

How well this principle has been illustrated in the history of the Portland and Montreal Railway? Had the money for that great work been furnished by British capitalists, or by capitalists elsewhere, the influence of the enterprise upon our people would have been vastly different from what is now felt among us.

With a population less than Halifax, and much less wealth, the city of Portland boldly pushed her Great Railway toward Montreal, encountering the severest competition that has ever been known, from a neighboring city. Our efforts in this behalf have summoned from ourselves an energy greater than has yet been shown by any people, and we are now accustomed to grasp with readiness, and accomplish with ease, what, with our former notions would have been impossible of attainment. It is the change in the habits of mind in the views—in the pursuits, of our people that shows the most marked results in the efforts toward carrying the Railway to Montreal. The returns will be an hundred fold greater to our city, from the investments in that work, than if the money had come to us without exertion, or been furnished with a liberal and profuse hand by others.

This experience of ours, should not be lost on the Provinces. They cannot hope for reasonable success by shirking the labor of raising the money principally from among themselves. I have an abiding faith that to this condition will they come at last.

The Colonial policy of Great Britain is in a fair way to be tested. The i'l-

digested system by which her Colonial Empire is now held together must soon be put to its severest test.

English Colonies were once governed by an abso'ute executive. Her colonial governors, like the Roman pro consuls, exercised Imperial authority in the name of the Crown. The Saxon blood asserted its right to share the authority in making laws, and Provincial Parliaments have grown into use wherever the Anglo Saxon race has planted its feet. Concessions from time to time have been granted. till the recent experiment has been attempted in British North America of "RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT." This principle is now asserted in all British America, and the model of the English Constitution is copied.—with this difference,—an executive holding place by Imperial appointment instead of hereditary descent. The difficulties of the system are already apparent in the constant interference of Imperial with Colonial interests. Canada sought to protect her iron manufactures by a discriminating duty, and the despatch of Earl Grey informed the Governor General of Canada, in 1848, that it would interfere with the interests of the Scotch iron masters, and was therefore against the interests of *the people of the Empire.* New Brunswick has just granted a charter for the E. and N. A. R. R., and Earl Grey requires the charter to conform to Imperial wishes and necessities. In other words, the Colonies may legislate for their own interests, when in the opinion of the English Ministry they do not jeopardize Imperial interests. These Imperial interests are not defined by any written law or constitution, but depend for their importance upon the ministerial idea of the hour.

A conflict of interests must sooner or later come up. The interests of the North American Provinces, with their abundant natural resources, are more in unison with our own, than with Imperial, European policy,—and nothing short of a total surrender to the Colonies of the management of their local, financial and commercial affairs, or an incorporation of the Colonies into the nation itself, as an integral part of the Empire, will satisfy the advancing spirit of progress and free opinion in British North America.

In abandoning the principles of responsible government, and yielding to the Imperial demands, *Mr. Howe* will find in the carrying out of his Railroad schemes full play for his versatile and imaginative powers. He now assures us, in the strongest terms, of the certainty of bringing the iron locomotive, by rail, from Halifax to the boundary of Maine,as soon as we can give it a similar track from the eastern boundary of Maine to Portland. But if he fails in bringing the discordant elements of Canadian legislation into harmony with that of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, he will then renew his pledges to the Portland Convention scheme, build the road as we must build ours, through private exertions, and join us at the same time and place at the boundary.

With these assurances before us—with the correspondence of the British Government in our hands, showing their appreciation of the scheme—with the testimony on all hands of the practicability and paying qualities of our whole line, will not the people of New England and the United States generally contribute in the form of subscriptions to the stock, the *one million of dollars* which we require to secure this great work?

Our course must be dependent upon the action of the Provinces. While expressing freely my own convictions, and those of the committee, I do not mean to question the right, or the wisdom of that policy in the Provinces, which shall most readily secure the means. If the British Government will give them the money at 3 1-2 *per cent.*, on such terms as they can bear, they will of course readily take it. But before the money is thus obtained, I think they are destined to undergo delays, if not, in the end, suffer disappointment. But when they will satisfy us of their readiness to bring their line to our frontier the interests of Maine will secure our portion of the route.

I speak thus confidently, for I am certain that the people of Maine appreciate,

in full measure, the value and importance of this enterprise to her prosperity.—The Railway System for Maine is marked out by her physical geography in relation to the St. Lawrence valley, and her commercial position. The Great Trunk Line, from the eastern cape of Nova Scotia, crossing our eastern frontier, and the Penobscot at the head of sea navigation, will reach the Kennebec valley, over the most direct and practicable route, where it shall divide into two great lines, connecting Canada and the St. Lawrence valley on the North, and all the States of the Union on the South. There is no practicable route north between the valley of the Chaudiere and the St. Francis. The merchant of Bangor and Calais will receive his supplies of flour and western produce with nearly the same ease and the same expense as the merchant of Portland or of Bath, for the Montreal line is the shortest and easiest route from the west to the seaboard, and the branches which shall spread themselves on each side this spinal chord, like the veins and and arteries of the human system, shall distribute the life blood of business into every portion of Maine.

If we can perfect and carry out this Railway System for Maine, a few years will give us a leading influence in the business affairs of the country beyond what the most sanguine among us dare to anticipate; and the influence which this stream of travel and business will exert upon the commercial relations of this continent, must touch with new life every branch of industry within striking distance of these great lines, that shall make our vallies echo with the hum of busy industry, and our hill sides to bud and blossom as the rose.

The Railway is yet to become the great benefactor of the North. It is destined to overcome the inconveniences of our climate, supplying the increased necessities which an athletic race require. In reflecting on what the Railway has achieved in the last twenty years, we may safely infer an accelerated movement for the future. The Railway becoming the handmaid of science and the nursery of art, shall hereafter change the relations of labor,—subject the elements to the control of man, and make the powers of nature obedient to his will; so that in our day, the luxuries of a southern latitude may be enjoyed in freshness and abundance amid the snows of the north—and the more healthful products of our New England climate, soften and relieve the scorching effects of a southern sky. The influences of climate and of social position will give the fullest developement to the active powers of man,—the highest enjoyment of which his physical, intellectual and social nature is susceptible. One feeling is common to us all at the north, whether under our own government or that of Great Britain, whether among the hills of New England or along the Atlantic shore; we share alike the desire to enjoy the luxuries of a southern climate without being subjected to its ills. This condition of things the Railway, and the Railway only, can bring. The excitements of more crowded cities, the easier soil of the west, will not fully satisfy that feeling of restless impatience, verging on discontent, which is always found in a hardy, athletic race. It wants full play at home. It seeks to bring the town and the country into easy acquaintance,—to bring to the doors of each, the supplies of reasonable want, to be enjoyed beneath healthful skies, and within our New England homes.

Let the Railways cover the surface of the country like a net work, from the farthest shore of Nova Scotia to the west. Let village, and city, and country share each other's pleasures, without labor and without fatigue, while the dreaded inconveniences of our climate are dispelled or subdued, and the arm of labor is here made strong, bringing at will its richest rewards. When this shall come to pass this region of the continent, this great peninsula between the river and the sea, so long overlooked, and so sparsely populated, shall become, from its commercial advantages, its healthful climate, and its geographical position, the finest portion of the earth.